the Open General Licence (OGL) category for import/export. The prices of aluminium/aluminium products are determined by market forces.

Legislation for mineral exploitation

3618. SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR BIRLA: Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to bring forth a legislation to enable optimum exploitation of minerals in off-shore areas;

(b) if so, the facts and details in this regard;

(c) whether the matter was discussed in a conference of State Ministers of Mines and Geology at New Delhi, recently;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) the outcome of the discussions held?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF MINES (SHRI JAYSINGRAO GAIKWAD PATEL): (a) and (b)Yes, Sir. The Government has prepared an Offshore Areas Mineral (Development and Regulation) Bill and the same is slated for introduction in the Lok Sabha.

(c) to (e) In the Conference of State Ministers of Mines & Geology held at New Delhi recently, the delegates were informed about Central Government's intention to enact a legislation for exploitation of mineral resources in the offshore areas. This matter was formally not on the agenda which was discussed.

NALCO exports at international prices

3619. SHRI ABANI ROY: Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether NALCQ is exporting fifty per cent of its production at international prices prevailing on LME, which are much lower than the prices at which they are selling the metal in the country;

(b) if so, whether several secondary manufacturers have been repeatedly representing to Government for abolishing customs duty on import of aluminium, so that the primary manufacturers bring down the sale prices to a reasonable level; and

(c) if so, what steps Government propose to take to ensure sale of aluminium in country at International prices only?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF MINES (SHRI JAYSINGRAO GAIKWAD PATIL): (a) The export of aluminium by NALCO, average domestic price and export price of aluminium during the last three years are as under.—

Year	Export of aluminium (percentage of production)	Domestic price (Rs./Tonne)	Export price (Rs/Tonne)
1998-99	27	67606	60379
1999-2000	45	73304	80049
2000-2001	52	79070	84856

(b) and (c) Representations have been received from secondary manufacturers for abolition of custom duty. There are no price controls on aluminium. Aluminium is kept under Open General Licence (OGL) category for import/export. The prices of aluminium metal and products are determined by market forces.

Nickel Plant in Orissa

3620. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL: Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Central Government have any proposal to set up a Nickel Plant in Orissa, since the technology proving of extraction of Nickel from Chrome Overburden has since been completed in February, 2001 by the Regional Research Laboratory (RRL), Bhubaneswar;

(b) if so, what steps Government have taken so far for techno-economic feasibility and commercial exploitation of Nickel and other associated material in the market; and

(c) whether Government have taken any decision so far to entrust the above job to any company?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF MINES (SHRI JAISINGRAO GAIKWAD PATIL): (a) At present there is no proposal for setting up of a Nickel extraction plant in State of Orissa.

(b) and (c) The Technology for extraction of Nickel from Chromite overburden has been developed jointly by Hindustan Zinc Limited (HZL) and